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THE GROUND
OF
CHRISTIAN DISCIPLINE
Briefly Explained;
AND
THE NECESSITY OF THE INFLUENCE
OF
HEAVENLY WISDOM
FOR ITS PROPER SUPPORT,
Enforced;
BY JOSEPH TATHAM.

WITHOUT ME, YE CAN DO NOTHING.—*John* xy. 5.
Not as though I had already attained, either were already
perfect.—*Phil.* iii. 12.

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TO FRIENDS IN THEIR SEVERAL QUARTERLY
AND MONTHLY MEETINGS.

DEAR FRIENDS,

In a degree of that love which is the ground and cement of true religious fellowship, and in a belief that the present state of our Society, may derive advantage from a close examination of the fundamental principle of Christian Discipline, I submit to your consideration the following remarks, with sincere desires that they may obtain, on your part, that attention which is proportioned to the importance of the subject.

The weighty duties which belong to Quarterly and Monthly Meetings, have, for some years, been the frequent subject of my reflections, and a desire has been excited in me, not to hold back any thing that may contribute, in however small a degree, to promote the general good of the body.

To Monthly Meetings is assigned the executive department of our Discipline—a momentous trust! the very existence of our Society in a state of respectability and efficiency, depending almost entirely on the right conducting of these Meet-

ings; whilst upon Quarterly Meetings devolves a highly responsible superintendence of all the Monthly Meetings which constitute them. Of what importance then is it, that in these Meetings, the principle of Christian Discipline should be well understood, and closely adhered to! I mean, not a mere adherence to the letter of outward rules, good in themselves, but a dwelling with and under the influence of that Divine power, which ought to be the crown of our assemblies. To these Meetings, then, thus united, we may look for the support of that Discipline, which in Divine wisdom has been established amongst us; and which, if rightly maintained, would very much conduce to preserve the body upon the one sure foundation, perhaps even more than any other circumstance. This foundation standeth sure. It is no other than the immutable Rock of Ages—Christ Jesus in his spiritual appearance—the revelation of his Name or Power in and amongst us, individually and collectively.

To this Name, which, under every dispensation, has been the sure refuge of the righteous, and which still continues to be their only preservation, I very tenderly and affectionately recommend you, and am

Your friend and brother,

JOSEPH TATHAM.

LEEDS,

*Camp-Lane Court,
10th Mo. 1824.*

ADVERTISEMENT.

Such is the propensity of human nature to deviate from a right course, that, without a frequent recurrence to first principles, there is a danger of Societies, as well as individuals, losing their settlement on the foundation upon which they were originally established. From this consideration, the Author of the following remarks has been led to entertain a fear, lest the disposition prevalent in many persons to attempt to set aside the necessity of Divine assistance in conducting the Discipline of the Church, should increase, and eventually lead us, as a Society, from the true foundation of our religious profession. This has induced him to endeavour, in the spirit of love, to convince the judgments of those who may entertain this sentiment, and thereby to check, if possible, this evil;—an evil which appears to him to savour much of presumption—to be highly offensive to the *Divine Being*—and likely to draw down his displeasure on our favoured Society.

As these remarks are designed only for the members of our own Society, it may seem the less necessary to observe, that the Author by no means wishes to depreciate human abilities, either natural or acquired. These are highly valuable in their places, and may be eminently useful in the Church, in various degrees, when they are sanctified by Divine Grace, and under the influence of the Holy Spirit. All that he insists upon, is, that unless they are thus sanctified, and act in subservience to this Spirit, it cannot be expected that they will avail towards promoting the kingdom of God.

This kingdom, we are assured, is *within*—of a spiritual nature—and consists in “righteousness, and peace, and joy, in the Holy Ghost;” Rom. xiv. 17. a state of mind in which the Spirit of Christ rules and reigns. If the establishment of this kingdom in the heart, is essentially requisite for all, in order that the great purpose of their being may be accomplished, how peculiarly so must it be for those who undertake to build up the Church of God, and thereby to promote the establishment of his kingdom in the hearts of others!

Many amongst us, it is to be feared, are lamentably insensible of their insufficiency of themselves for this work; and therefore they feel not the necessity of waiting for the influence of that power which alone can qualify them for such service. It was this power, however, which wrought so effectually in many of our predecessors, and strengthened them to bear such a fight of afflictions, and to contend so valiantly “for the faith once delivered to the saints.” Jude i. 3.

The object of the present little work, is by no means to discourage any friends from attending meetings for Discipline, but the contrary. And as the right support of these meetings, and the part we take in them, are matters of great importance to ourselves and to the Society, the Author is solicitous to put Friends upon a careful examination how far they are active in them, so as to promote their own best interests, and the interest of the cause they profess to serve. For want of attending to the important business of Meetings for Discipline in a proper spirit, and with a suitable preparation of heart, many, it is to be feared, really injure themselves, and the cause they are desirous to forward. The design of the following observations, is, if possible, to prevent so unhappy an effect; and if they shall conduce, in any degree, to this salutary purpose, the Author will think himself amply repaid for his labour.

THE GROUND, &c.

“God is a Spirit:” John iv. 24. and communion with Him can be enjoyed only through a spiritual medium. For this purpose, in the riches of his goodness towards poor fallen man, He has furnished every individual with a measure of his own pure Spirit;—that “unspeakable gift,” 2 Cor. ix. 15. purchased for us by the sufferings and death of his beloved Son. Through the enlightening, purifying efficacy of this Divine Principle of Life, man is mercifully put into a capacity to see and feel his lost condition by nature, and to regain that purity and holiness, from which by disobedience our first parents fell. For this Spirit, as it is cordially united with, qualifies him to contend successfully with the principle of evil in his own heart, and eventually enables him to be more than conqueror. The strong man armed that had occupied the house, is cast out, and his goods are spoiled: a complete change takes place in his heart; the affections are transferred from earth to heaven; and the pure Seed of the kingdom, before oppressed and

buried, as it were, under the load of sin, gains the ascendancy.

In the progress of this work, the heart becomes the scene of many a conflict between these two powers, the evil nature often striving to regain the superiority; but, as a holy confidence in the measure of Light and Grace afforded, is maintained, and a steady adherence to it preserved, the progress of the soul will be sure, and its efforts ultimately crowned with success. Thus emancipated from this greater than Egyptian bondage, man is enabled to rejoice in "the glorious liberty of the children of God." Rom. viii. 21. Having thus, through the quickening, regenerating influence of the Spirit, known a transition from the carnal to the spiritual state, or, in the language of our Saviour to Nicodemus, being "born again," John iii. 7. or from above, he receives spiritual faculties and powers to which he was before a stranger; and, persevering in faithfulness, experiences a spiritual growth from strength to strength—from the child's state to that of a young man; and thence to that of a strong man;—nay, to that of a "perfect man," Eph. iv. 13.—a "man of God"—"thoroughly furnished unto all good works." 2 Tim. iii. 17.

This was the blessed experience of the truly living amongst our predecessors;—men and women eminently raised and qualified to lift up the standard of Truth and Righteousness. These,

through the powerful operation of the quickening Word, were "baptized into Christ," even "into his death," so that, "as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father," they also were enabled to "walk in newness of life." Rom. vi. 4. They were "made to drink into one spirit," 1 Cor. xii. 13. and thus they became members of that mystical body, the Church, of which Christ Jesus is the Head; growing up into Him, and experiencing Him to be made unto them, "Wisdom, and Righteousness, and Sanctification, and Redemption." 1 Cor. i. 30.

This union of the members of the true Church with Christ the Head, is beautifully set forth by our Saviour, when he compares Himself to the vine, and his followers to the branches. As these are supported by the root, receive nourishment from it, and entirely depend upon it; so the living members of the true Church depend upon Christ, the Head, and derive their life, strength, and qualification for service solely from Him. For, "as the branch," says our Saviour, "cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in Me." John xv. 4.

Thus it is clear, that, consistently with the observation of the apostle, "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discern-

ed." 1 Cor. ii. 14. Man, therefore, without experiencing that change of heart, through the Spirit of Christ, expressed by the term, Regeneration, or the new Birth, is wholly a stranger to the kingdom of God. This kingdom is of a spiritual nature, consisting in "righteousness, and peace, and joy, in the Holy Ghost," Rom. xiv. 17.—a righteousness begotten in us by and through the Spirit of Christ dwelling in us, clothing our spirits with his own robe, and diffusing, at times, through our whole man, a peace and joy which those in the natural state cannot even conceive. And our Saviour, in his conference with Nicodemus, positively declares, that "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." John iii. 3.

Our predecessors having known this kingdom to be come, and having, by its power and prevalence in their hearts, experienced an establishment in sound Christian doctrine and practice, it became the concern of that deeply instructed and enlightened Elder, George Fox, that they might be preserved therein. He was, therefore, led in the power and Spirit of God, to establish Meetings for Discipline. For this purpose he travelled through most parts of the nation, and wrote epistles, or encouraged friends to go to such parts as he did not then visit in person. In recording his account of these services, he has, *upon one occasion*, the following expressions:

“There all the Men’s Monthly Meetings for that county were settled in the glorious order of the gospel; that all, in the power of God, might seek that which was lost—bring again that which was driven away; cherish the good, and reprove the evil.” This concise and comprehensive statement combines the principal objects aimed at in our Meetings for Discipline, and exhibits the foundation upon which they were originally settled; the great purposes which they were designed to answer; and the manner in which they should be conducted, in order effectually to accomplish these purposes—namely, *in the power of God*.

George Fox was also led, under the influence of the same Spirit and Power by which he had established the *Men’s Meetings for Discipline*, to establish similar Meetings for the *Women*, many things in these meetings being, in his judgment, more proper for the women than the men. And deeply sensible of the great advantages likely to result from this union of their services in the church, he was strenuous in encouraging all, both men and women, notwithstanding the opposition met with from many, to “keep their meetings in the power of God, the authority of them;” whereby they might be preserved both over that spirit which opposed them therein, and over the spirit of the world which opposed their other meetings.

Now these Meetings being settled in the wisdom and power of God, can be properly main-

tained only by the same power by which they were first established; they should be held *in his Name—in his power and authority*. The members active in the support of the Discipline of the Church, should be “men of upright hearts and clean hands, rightly prepared for the service they undertake.”* And as the right ability for such service is not always present, nor at the command even of minds that have been previously made acquainted with the operations of the Spirit, and its blessed effects in the heart, they should “wait in humility to have their own spirits brought into a holy subjection to the Spirit of Christ, that thereby they may be duly qualified for the work and service conducive to the building up of his church.”†

This preparation of heart for the Lord's service, will appear the more necessary, when we consider that He is purity itself, and infinite in wisdom; and all who approach Him must, in degree at least, partake of this purity: “Be ye holy, for I the Lord your God, am holy.” 1 Peter i. 16. “The carnal mind,” we are assured, “is enmity against God;” Rom. viii. 7. those therefore in whom it predominates, cannot be acceptable to Him. Their minds are actuated by principles which are in direct opposition to Him, and lead to a conduct that would, if pos-

* See “Book of Extracts,” Discipline, No. 13.

† See “Book of Extracts,” Discipline, No. 13.

sible, entirely subvert his kingdom. This kingdom is spiritual, and the faculties requisite for its support, must, in accordance with the sentiments of the apostle, be also spiritual: "Brethren," saith he in his Epistle to the Galatians, "if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye who are *spiritual*, restore such an one in the *spirit of meekness*." Gal. vi. 1.

The carnal and the unregenerate know not the nature of the kingdom of God, because, persisting to refuse obedience to his holy Light, they are strangers to his power inwardly revealed, and therefore cannot act in his name or power. To such, then, in so unqualified an interference, might not the language be applicable, "Who has required this at your hand?" Isaiah, i. 12. But if this power were prevalent, the members active in the support of our discipline, having been baptized through the one spirit into the one body, would be careful to keep a single eye to the Head, Christ Jesus—would move and act solely under his influence, and thus preserve their places in the church, in the dignity and authority of Truth.

In cases which admit of being contemplated in various lights, it may happen, that, from the different views which friends take of them, a diversity of sentiment may appear; yet this diversity, though at first apparently in opposition, may eventually, by bringing the subject in all its

bearings fully before friends, beautifully conduce to lead the meeting to a right and harmonious conclusion. For, each member being preserved in his proper place, meek and lowly, separate from all selfish considerations, and solely desirous that the cause of Truth and Righteousness may prevail, he would have no desire to press his sentiments upon the meeting further than is consistent with the will of the Great Master; but, having clearly expressed his feelings upon the subject in question, he would then leave them, studying to avoid even the appearance of strife or vain glory; and cherishing that disposition which would lead him to prefer others before himself.

And thus, as a real travail of spirit is maintained for the prevalence of Divine life and power amongst them, and friends wait in simplicity for the unfoldings of that wisdom which is from above, they may humbly hope, that He who has promised to be with his disciples to the end of the world, will condescend, on these occasions, to manifest his will, to his own glory, and the edification of the church. If, however, in inscrutable wisdom, this evidence is for a while withheld, then faith and patience are called into exercise, and, in such cases, it is undoubtedly safest to stand still, and refer the subject for further consideration. These seasons of suspense may, like every other trial, if rightly improved, serve to convince us of our utter inability of our-

selves to decide, and that the *judgment is of the Lord*. They conduce, in a remarkable manner, to humble and mortify the creaturely part in us; and in the same proportion to exalt the Name, the power and the authority of Christ.

We may remember the manner in which the conference of the Apostles, the Elders, and the whole Church, was conducted, when they were assembled at Jerusalem, to consider the question of circumcising the Gentiles, and commanding them to keep the law of Moses. In this conference a very considerable difference of sentiment appears to have prevailed; they were, however, eventually enabled harmoniously to unite in the proposition of that eminent servant, James; and in their epistle to the church at Antioch, written upon this occasion, to adopt this expression: "It hath seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us," &c. Acts xv. 28. thus declaring their power and authority in deciding this important point, to be on the very ground for which the Author contends—that of the Holy Spirit, as the only sure and certain ground of judgment in the Church, in the present spiritual dispensation.

If then, consistently with the example here exhibited, all our members active in the discipline of the church, had previously experienced the Lord's preparing hand for service, and were preserved in their proper places, diligently labouring to contribute their portion of exercise

and travail for the arising of the pure life into dominion in these meetings, all would be careful to "walk by the same rule;" Phil. iii. 16. and the affairs of the church would be conducted to the glory of Christ, and to the edification of the body in love.

It may, perhaps, be objected by some, that this preparation for service, by submission to the sanctifying operation of the Spirit, can apply only to ministerial labour, and not to the manner of transacting the usual discipline of the church. We should, however, bear in mind that the great object of these meetings, is "to build up the church of God," and thereby to promote the extension of his kingdom. This has been shown to be spiritual; and therefore all the wisdom of the natural man, however eminent and refined, unaided by the Divine Spirit, is wholly unequal to the work. The Creator and Governor of the world has endowed mankind with various talents and powers, to answer the wise ends of his providence; and persons of eminent abilities are capable of extensive usefulness amongst men. But in order to promote the spiritual kingdom of God, and to build up his church, these abilities, whether natural or acquired, must be sanctified by Divine Grace. Thus subservient to the Holy Spirit, and devoted to the cause of piety and virtue, they become of distinguished use in promoting the good of men, the glory of God, and the

prosperity of his church. Whatever labours therefore, for this purpose, are to be performed, the right ability is to be derived from the Spirit: "It is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing." John vi. 63. And whatever diversities of gifts may be conferred upon the church, in order most effectually to accomplish this great work, they all proceed from "the self same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will;" 1 Cor. xii. 11. and upon all occasions proportioning, in wisdom, the measure of power to the nature and importance of the service required.

And, blessed be the name of the Lord! He has not, even in this day, wholly withdrawn his good Spirit from being thus "a spirit of judgment to them who sit in judgment," Isaiah xxviii. 6. as they are attentive, in humility of heart, and under a sense of their insufficiency of themselves for any good work, to look unto Him for the needful supplies of wisdom and knowledge. No, He is at times still pleased, through his humble, dependent children, graciously to communicate his will to us; and He would, no doubt, much more frequently display his power and goodness in our assemblies; were we more alive in our spirits—more engaged to press after the arising of his Name into dominion in them, by each one bowing to the root of life in himself, and earnestly wrestling for the blessing of *heavenly help*.

But if, in the place of this humble reliance upon the great Source of wisdom, any one who had not experienced the right preparation for service, should attempt, in the strength of his natural or acquired abilities, to forward the work as he might suppose, his exertions would be a burden to the rightly exercised, living members; and, instead of contributing to the edification of the body, would serve only to "darken counsel," and bring death over the meeting. Such as thus officiously interfere, or intrude into services not required at their hands, would do well seriously to consider the awful consequence which resulted to Uzzah, from his presuming, unbidden, "to put forth his hand to hold the ark," when the oxen stumbled. 1 Chron. xiii. 9.

As the writings of our early friends uniformly concur in maintaining the necessity of waiting for this pure heavenly wisdom, in order to qualify an individual or a meeting to act consistently with the principles we profess, it might not be improper, upon this occasion, to bring into view the particular sentiments of different friends, all tending to confirm the preceding remarks. The limits, however, prescribed to these observations, will not admit of many extracts. The following from an epistle of that valuable Minister and Elder, Charles Marshall, is peculiarly apposite: "Set not about the affairs of Truth without some *feeling* and helping of it (the pure heavenly wis-

dom.) For this I have seen ; no parts or acquirements whatever, without the guiding, counselling, instructing wisdom of the Lord, will carry on truly, or effect rightly, the affairs of Truth, although it be in outward things. And my heavenly Father whom I have loved and feared from very tender years, has shown me, that in the sensual wisdom stands the strife, and out of that ground arise the exaltedness, haste, rashness, schisms, rents, and sects, &c.”*

In confirmation of this expressive extract, I may add a recommendation of the Yearly Meeting in London, by its Epistle in the Year 1706: “And, dear friends and brethren, in the name and power of our Lord Jesus Christ, keep all your meetings entirely, both those for his divine worship, and those for good order and discipline in the church, which Divine power we all ought to wait to feel, to prepare and sanctify our minds and spirits, that we may be duly qualified for our share and part of our service therein. And in the same heavenly power and dominion, labour to keep

* The works of I. Penington, *passim*, point out the necessity of Divine Wisdom for the due performance of religious services. See also Barclay's Treatise on Christian Discipline, originally entitled, “The Anarchy of the Ranters:” also the chapter on this subject in Griffith's Remarks ; and a variety of observations interspersed throughout his Journal ; also the Journals of John Churchman, John Woolman, Thomas Wilson, Job Scott, &c. and particularly John Woolman's Epistle to Quarterly and Monthly Meetings.

out strife and contention, and stand over all forward and contentious spirits, not in your own, but in the meek spirit of the Lamb of God."*

In perfect unison with this, is also the following advice of the Yearly Meeting held in Dublin 1814: "Dear Friends, in the words of an eminent servant of the Lord, "Keep all your meetings in the power of God." Feel after, wait for, the arising of his power in all your meetings, both for worship and discipline. In conducting the weighty affairs of the church, let us not rest satisfied with an acquaintance with the letter, but seek for that life and power which only can qualify us for rightly supporting our Christian Discipline, either in our meetings, or in our more private labours with our friends: remembering that "except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it; except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain." Psalm cxxvii. 1.

From the preceding observations it appears that agreeably to the standard held up by our worthy predecessors, it was essentially requisite that those who undertook to be active in the exercise of the discipline established amongst them, should have previously experienced the right preparation for service by submission to the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit. And as the

* See also the Yearly Meeting's Epistles for 1693, 1700, 1703, 1704, 1717, 1722, 1726, 1738, and 1747.

greatest human abilities, whether natural or acquired, were found insufficient of themselves for the work, they were, in addition to this fundamental experience, to "wait for, and depend upon the wisdom and power of God, for counsel and direction," and in their various services to move under the leadings of his Spirit.

This standard, thus held up, has continued all along unchanged, and still remains to be the standard round which we ought to gather in the present day. To be assured of this point, we need only advert to the many concurring testimonies of friends of established character, in strict accordance with the various advices which have, from time to time, been issued by the body. May all, then, to whom the cause of truth is precious, be encouraged to gather to it, and labour to maintain upon its original basis that discipline, which, founded "in the wisdom and power of God," would, if thus rightly maintained, preserve us a people to his praise!

For many years after the establishment of Meetings for discipline, they were restricted to such as by their religious attainments might be considered as fathers and mothers—such as had in their own living experience, known those baptismal preparations, by which they were rightly qualified to administer counsel and encouragement to others. From a desire, however, that the youth, and those of less growth in religious

experience, might not lose the benefits to be derived from the attendance of these meetings, they were in process of time open to all other members of the Society; not, it is apprehended, in the expectation that these should immediately, whether thus qualified or not, take an active part in their transactions, but that they might enjoy those opportunities of improvement, which such meetings, when conducted under the right authority, are well calculated to afford. Through the goodness and mercy of our Heavenly Father, they have been, and still are favoured at times with the overshadowing wing of the Divine presence; and to the humble, attentive mind, desirous to be taught, they are then, in an especial manner, seasons of deep and heart-felt instruction.

In these favoured seasons young persons have, no doubt, many opportunities of obtaining much instruction; and by rightly improving them, may come to know a preparation for service, and in due time receive ability to supply the places of their elder brethren and sisters, removed from works to rewards. Thus, by a proper exercise of spirit, these in concert, with their more advanced friends, may contribute according to their measure, towards raising into dominion that life which is the crown of our assemblies; participate in the enjoyment resulting from its presence; and assist, in no inconsiderable degree, in *promoting the edification of the body.*

These meetings are also, it must be allowed, from the many deficiencies amongst us which are there brought under consideration, frequently seasons of deep suffering to the faithful; yet it is cause of thankfulness to these, that even in those sufferings, they are favoured to feel a degree of holy assurance, that they are therein united to the living body of which Christ Jesus is the Head; and this assurance begotten in them by the power of God, is an unspeakable support to them under every trial.

It is, however, to be feared that many are to be found within our borders, who, instead of contributing to the circulation of life in our meetings, are as weights and burdens. These, unwilling to submit to the restraining influence of the Spirit, and desirous to preserve their fancied independence, are led, through the subtlety of Satan, to call in question the existence of a Divine communication to the mind. Thus doubts are excited; and these once admitted, tend, in proportion to the indulgence they receive, gradually to close that eye which can alone enable them to see their real situation, and eventually so to darken the understanding, that, lost to all religious sensibility, they become "like the heath in the desert, and see not when good cometh." Jer. xvii. 6.

What a distressing prospect does the defection which is to be observed on the part of many,

who ought to be coming forward as standard-bearers amongst us, present to the spiritually feeling mind ! Where shall we look for a succession of labourers in defence of the noble cause of Truth—a cause for which many of our ancestors sacrificed all that was dear to them in this life—if those who are favoured with every advantage to qualify them to step into the places of their elder brethren and sisters withdrawn from the labour of the militant Church, desert their proper posts, and basely suffer that standard which their predecessors had nobly erected, to fall into the hands of the enemy ? Let this consideration excite you, my dear friends, who see the state of things, and bear the burden of this eventful day, earnestly to seek to dwell near to the Fountain of all-sufficiency, Christ Jesus, “in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” Col. ii. 3. Here you will experience preservation ; and hence you will derive ability to encounter whatever opposition you may meet with from a contrary spirit prevailing in the hearts of those, who have not been willing to submit to the preparing, sanctifying power of the Spirit of Christ. Greater is He that is in you, than he that ruleth in the hearts of the children of disobedience. Fear not therefore, “be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having *done all, to stand.*” Ephes. vi. 10, 13.

As you are preserved here, watchful against the many wiles of the enemy, faithful to the various duties of your station, and, like good soldiers inured to hardness, patient in bearing every trial—every dispensation allotted by Infinite Wisdom, for your own increased refinement, or for the edification of the body, you will more and more experience a union with Christ in spirit; and though it be your lot to know “the fellowship of his sufferings,” Phil. iii. 10. you will also “know the power of his resurrection,” Phil. iii. 10. and partake of that consolation which aboundeth by Him. Thus as you advance in years, you will have the satisfaction to reflect that you have done *what you could*;—you will be enabled to acknowledge with the Apostle: “Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world;” 2 Cor. i. 12. and at the close of your labours, mercifully “know an entrance ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.” 2 Pet. i. 11.

And now, ye little humble ones who have known, in some measure, the preparing hand of the Lord for service in his church—you in whose eyes He has tarnished the glory of the present world, to whom He has unfolded the beauties of his new creation, and whom He has drawn by

the pure influence of divine love, to love Himself above all ; O, how I long for your preservation in simple, child-like obedience, and increased dedication to the cause of truth and righteousness ! Be assured, my dear friends, that the preceding remarks are by no means designed to discourage the feeblest efforts of the least child of the kingdom, who, in obedience to the gentle intimations of the Master, is drawn in diffidence to offer a sentiment in our meetings for discipline. Such communications, proceeding from the pure life, will no doubt be received with acceptance, and gradually introduce you to more enlarged services in the church. Your elder brethren will rejoice in the prospect of such a succession of labourers in the vineyard, and hold out to you the inviting language: Come and have fellowship with us, for "truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." 1 John i. 3.

In this fellowship—this heavenly communion of spirit, you will feel an enlivening and animating support, and be increasingly encouraged to devote yourselves, even without reserve, to the most honourable cause of the best of Masters. And though the prospect before you may be discouraging, so much so that at times you may be almost ready to shrink from the service, yet "fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Luke. xii. 32. The smooth stones which are gathered in faith from

the brook in the valley of humiliation, and cast "in the name of the Lord of Hosts, the God of the armies of Israel," 1 Sam. xvii. 45. continue to be effectual against the Goliaths, to the present day. Trust only in the Lord, and attempt not to go forth in any thing like Saul's armour—in the strength of your natural powers as men. Seek to have your habitation in the light, watching daily at wisdom's gates, and you will be enabled to judge soundly of what is offered by others, see clearly what is required of yourselves, and receive ability to perform it, to your own comfort, and to the glory of the great Head of the church. Thus you will experience a growing up into Him in all things; and, by an honest, steady dedication of heart to his cause, be instrumental in your day, in hastening that period when Zion shall be justly called, "The perfection of beauty"—"The joy of the whole earth." Lam. ii. 15.

Before I conclude my observations on the subject of this little work, it may not be improper to make a few additional remarks, which appear to be important, and which may possibly tend to remove difficulties and objections from the minds of some of my readers, and afford a degree of encouragement to others.

It is indeed, as has been already shown, an indubitable and momentous truth, that, in religious matters, we can do nothing that is truly

good, and acceptable to our Heavenly Father, without the influence and assistance of the Holy Spirit. The degrees of this influence are doubtless variously distributed to his children and people, to answer his wise and gracious designs in the church. What portion of this sacred influence, will be sufficient to authorize or require any individual member of the Society to take an active part in promoting the discipline, it becomes not me to particularize and determine. But we may rest assured that he who possesses an honest, humble, and upright mind, who cherishes in his breast the love of God and the love of men, and who feels solicitous for the true interest of his fellow-members, and for the advancement of a wholesome discipline amongst them; will seldom or never be at a loss to discern, when he is warranted or required to speak or act for the promotion of a cause which he has so much at heart. Is there not rather reason to believe that, in an affair of so much moment, his Heavenly Father will not only give him clearly to see what is required of him, but that He will also furnish the ability to attend to the holy requisition, with an encouraging evidence of peace?

On the other hand I think it may be safely pronounced, without any breach of charity, that the individuals who do not sincerely press after the attainment of these holy and heavenly *temper*s, evinced by a consistent life and conversa-

tion, and who do not feel themselves sincerely concerned for the religious welfare of our Society, and the members who compose it, are not rightly qualified to assist in promoting the discipline of the church, whatever may be their talents and qualifications for advancing the civil or general interests of society at large.

Of these friends, however, a hope may be indulged, that having been educated in the Society, and having seen the good works and examples of others, and considered the sound principles from which those works proceeded, they may, in due time, be induced to "go and do likewise;" Luke x. 37.—to seek for ability rightly to advocate the cause of truth and righteousness, by a patient submission to the preparing, qualifying influence of the Holy Spirit; and thus in true simplicity of heart, and pious dedication of their talents and advantages, may be happily enabled to glorify their Father who is in heaven.

These to whom I have been alluding, in taking a review of years that are past, may have to recollect repeated invitations of Divine Love, which they have unhappily suffered to remain unregarded, some even to a late hour of their day. May they, however, be encouraged to accept the offers of Divine Goodness, and earnestly seek for reconciliation, whilst their day of mercy is, in inexpressible loving-kindness, lengthened out! To those who shall have been thus favoured to

see their situation, and careful, by submission to the power of Truth revealed within, to avail themselves of this continued forbearance of their Heavenly Father, the truly living amongst us will cordially give "the right hands of fellowship," Gal. ii. 9, and rejoice with them in their emancipation from that state of subserviency to the world and its spirit, in which they had been held.

Thus a harmonious co-operation of the different classes amongst us would prevail, and without doubt be attended with blessed effects. The elders would be animated to persevere with increased alacrity in their labours of love;—the youth would be encouraged to imitate their bright and cheering example; and all would happily concur in promoting upon earth the kingdom of God and his Christ—in accelerating the day when "from the rising of the sun even to the going down of the same, the Name of the Lord will be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense will be offered to his Name, and a pure offering." Mal. i. 11.

APPENDIX :

CONTAINING

SELECTIONS

FROM THE WRITINGS OF FRIENDS,

EXHIBITING

A VARIETY OF CONCURRING TESTIMONIES

TO THE NECESSITY OF

HEAVENLY WISDOM,

FOR THE RIGHT SUPPORT

OF THE

DISCIPLINE

ESTABLISHED AMONGST US.

The following Selections from Authors of established character and reputation, in addition to those which have been already given, will not, it is apprehended, stand in need of any apology. They clearly exhibit the fundamental principle upon which the Discipline of our Society was originally established—the *wisdom and power of God*; and cannot but be truly interesting to all who are desirous that a sound discipline should be preserved amongst us. When we consider the importance of its proper support, and the propensities of our nature to slide even from what we have been abundantly convinced is right, occasional mementos of this sort may not be without their use.

APPENDIX.

George Fox.

No. 1. "At Loveday Hambley's (in Cornwall) we had a general meeting for all the county, in which the Monthly Meetings were settled in the *Lord's power*, and in the blessed order of the gospel; that all who were *faithful might admonish and exhort* such as walked not according to the gospel; that so *the house of God might be kept clean*, and righteousness might run down, and all unrighteousness be swept away."

Journal, p. 398.—1668.

No. 2. Thus were the Men's Monthly Meetings settled through the nation. And the Quarterly Meetings were generally settled before. I writ also into Ireland by faithful friends, and into Scotland, Holland, Barbadoes, and other

parts of America, advising friends to settle their Men's Monthly Meetings in those countries also. And since the time these meetings have been settled, that all the *faithful in the power of God*, who be heirs of the gospel, have met together *in the power of God*, which is the *authority of them*, to perform service to the Lord therein, many mouths have been opened in thanksgivings and praise, and many have blessed the Lord God, that ever he did send me forth in this service, yea, with tears have they praised the Lord."

Journal, p. 400.—1668.

No. 3. "And as I had been moved of the Lord, to travel *in his power* round about this nation, and in other parts, to *preach* the everlasting Gospel and to declare the Word of Life which was in the beginning, through many imprisonments, hardships, sufferings, and trials; so I was afterwards moved to travel *in the same heavenly power* about the nation again, (and to write to such places where I came not,) to recommend unto friends the *setting up of the Quarterly and Monthly Meetings* in all countries, for the looking after the poor, and taking care for orderly proceedings in marriage, and other matters relating to the church of Christ.—And after this also, Truth still spreading further over the nation, and Friends increasing in number, I was moved by

the same Eternal Power, to recommend the setting up of Women's Meetings also, that all, both male and female, that had received the Gospel, the Word of Eternal Life, might come into the order of the Gospel, brought forth by the power of God, and might act for God in the power and therein do business and service for Him in his church.

“All the *faithful* must labour in God's vineyard, they being his hired servants, and He having given them the earnest of his Spirit. For a master that hires a servant, and gives him the earnest of his hire, expects he shall do his work, after he knows his will, in the outward creation; so all God's people that be of the *new creation*, and have received the earnest of his Spirit, ought to labour *with, by, and in his Spirit, power, and grace, and faith in the Light*, in God's vineyard, that they, may have their wages, every one, male and female, when they have done God's work and business in his day, which is Eternal Life. But *none can labour in his vineyard, and do his work and his will, but as they walk in the Heavenly Divine Light, Grace, and Spirit of Christ.*”

Journal, p. 492.—1676.

No. 4. “*Keep all your Meetings in the Name of the Lord Jesus, that be gathered in his name, by his Light, grace, Truth, Power, and Spirit; by*

which you will feel his blessed and refreshing presence among you, and in you, to your comfort and God's glory.

“And now, all Friends, *all your Meetings*, both Men's and Women's Monthly and Quarterly and Yearly, &c. were set up by the *Power and Spirit and Wisdom of God*; and in them you do know that you have felt both his power, and spirit, and wisdom, and blessed refreshing presence among you, and in you, to his praise and glory, and your comfort; so that you have been a city set on a hill that cannot be hid.”

Epistle, left sealed up at his decease, 1690.

Isaac Pennington.

No. 5. “It is the holy will and pleasure of the great God, that *his church should be governed by his Holy Spirit and power revealed in it*. God is the God of order, and not of confusion, and He would have every thing in the *right and holy order* every where, especially in *his church*. He has given a measure of *his good Spirit* to every man, and he would have every man governed thereby: and he hath given *more of his good spirit and holy power* to his church than to any particular; and he would have his church governed

thereby." "A church is a gathering *in the name power, and authority of the Most High, and Christ*, to whom God gave all power in heaven and earth, *is in them and with them*. God knows *they can do nothing without his power*; and He is faithful who hath appointed them to meet together in *his Name*, and will not fail them.

"The Church is a body; every particular soul that is *renewed, quickened, and kept alive*, is a member. Now every member needs the presence and power of that Spirit which quickened it, to nourish, keep alive, and order it. And the Church hath much more need of the Spirit to be present with it, to guide and order it, and to keep it in the *holy order, power, and government of Life*. And this order and holy government *in the spirit and power of the Lord*, was brought forth in the Apostles' days."

"The Church is a spiritual body, and is to take care of her members, to look after them that they mind the Truth, and walk according to Truth, and to admonish and reprove them when they do otherwise. *Every Member hath need of the Light, Spirit, and Power* which God gives his Church, and *reveals in his Church, for the good of the body*, and the benefit and advantage of each member therein."

Considerations of Church Government.

Stephen Crisp.

No. 6. And all you, dear Friends, upon whom the Lord hath laid a care for his honour and for the prosperity of the Truth, and gathered you into the good order of the Gospel, to meet together to manage the affairs thereof; take heed that ye have a single eye to the Lord, *to do the Lord's business in the leadings of his Spirit*, which is but one, and brings all that are given up to be governed by it, to be of one mind and heart, at least, in the general purpose and service of those meetings; although, through the diversity of exercises, and the several degrees of growth among the brethren, every one may not see or understand alike in every matter, at the first propounding of it: yet this makes no breach of the unity, nor hinders the brotherly kindness, but puts you often upon an exercise, and an inward travailing, *to feel the pure, peaceable wisdom that is from above to open among you*; and every one's ear is open to it, in whomsoever it speaks; and thereby a sense of life is given in the meeting, to which all that are of a simple and tender mind, join and agree."

Epistle of Tender Love, &c. 1690. p. 529 of his Life and Works, 4to.

Robert Barclay.

No. 7. "The Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Head of the Body, the Church, (for the Church is the body of Christ, and the saints are the several members of that body,) knowing, in his infinite wisdom, what was needful for the good ordering and disposing [of] all things in their proper place, and for preserving and keeping all in their right station, did, in the dispensation and communication of his Holy Spirit, minister unto every member a measure of the same spirit, yet diverse, according to operation, for the edification of the body : some Apostles, some Teachers, some Pastors, some Elders. There are old men ; there are young men ; there are babes. For all are not apostles, neither are all elders, neither are all babes ; yet are all members : and as such, all have a sense and feeling of the life of the body, which from the Head flows unto all the body, as the ointment of Aaron's beard unto the skirts of his garment."

Anarchy of the Ranters, p. 3.

No. 8. "The Apostle Paul defines the Church

in his salutation to the Corinthians, 1 Cor. i. 2. 'Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints.' So the Church is such as 'are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints.'"

Anarchy, p. 29.

No. 9. "By the Church of Christ, I understand all those that truly and really have received and hold the Truth as it is in Jesus, and are in measure sanctified, or sanctifying in and by the power and virtue thereof, working in their inward parts."

Anarchy, p. 71.

William Penn.

No. 10. "In these solemn assemblies for the Church's service, there is no one presides among them after the manner of the assemblies of other people:—*Christ only being their President, as He is pleased to appear in life and wisdom in any one or more of them, to whom, whatever be their capacity or degree, the rest adhere with a firm unity, not of authority, but conviction, which is the Divine authority and way of Christ's Power and*

Spirit in his people, making good his blessed promise that he would be in the midst of his, where and whenever they were met together in *his Name*, even to the end of the world."

Rise and Progress.

George Whitehead.

No. 11. "And as the *Lord's Power and wisdom* have been and are the *authority of your meetings concerned in the Church's affairs*, namely, both those of the *faithful men*, and those of the *faithful women*: do you all *humbly wait to feel the same*, and be in *subjection to the same blessed power*, in the holy fear of Almighty God; that his Holy Spirit and Power may sanctify and overshadow all your assemblies, to his praise, and your great consolation in our Lord Jesus Christ."

Epistle of True Christian Love, 1707.

William Edmundson.

No. 12. "It is no small charge that the Lord commits to the care of the Men's and Women's Meetings, the care of his flocks, the preservation

of the testimony of Truth, and the honour of his great and worthy Name : so that it is of absolute necessity for all the members, both male and female, to know their election, and in what it stands, and in what authority they sit in these meetings ; for the service thereof must be performed *in the wisdom and counsel of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the authority of his blessed Spirit and Power.* For the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God, in which the election stands ; and this is that which fits and abilitates for the Lord's service in his Church, as He hath appointed every one to his service and office. And we know that our Men and Women's Meetings for the Lord's service in his Church were ordained of God, and settled among us *in the authority and by the assistance of his blessed Spirit and Power,* and committed to the trust and care of *faithful men and faithful women,* to keep them up *in the Spirit and Power of God,* in which they were set up."

Epistle concerning Men and Women's Meetings.

1708.

John Gough.

No. 13. "It is a principle of belief with them, [Friends,] that *under the influence of the Holy Spirit* this Discipline was originally established, and that *the same Divine Influence is the requisite qualification for conducting it with propriety to edification*, as well as for the work of the ministry, and every other service of the Church."

History of Friends, Vol. 2, p. 167.

John Churchman.

No. 14. "I loved to attend religious meetings, especially those for Discipline. And it was clearly shown me that *all who attend those meetings should inwardly wait, in great awfulness, to know the immediate presence of Christ, the Head of the Church, to give them an understanding what their several services are, and for ability to answer the requirements of Truth*; for it is by the *Light and Spirit* thereof, that the *Lord's work is done with acceptance.*"

Journal, p. 14.

John Griffith.

No. 15. "To be capable of acting rightly in the Discipline of the Church, man must be born of the Spirit, or from above, and receive a qualification from the Holy Ghost for that work."

Remarks, p. 87.

No. 16. "All the power and wisdom of man, till it be subjected, sanctified, and properly influenced by a supernatural principle, is wholly excluded from, and shut out of the Church of God."

Remarks, p. 93.

No. 17. "The only way to preserve the strength, glory, and dignity of a religious society, is for all who undertake to be active in it, *certainly to feel the Lord leading and directing them in all their services*; and, on the other hand, the sure way to desolation is, when *the active members in religious things, move therein by the strength of human abilities only.*"

Journal, p. 194.

John Woolman.

No. 18. "Now as my mind has been exercised before the Lord, I have seen that the *Discipline* of the Church of Christ standeth in that which is *pure*, that *it is the Wisdom from above which gives authority to Discipline*, and that the weightiness thereof standeth not in any outward circumstances, but in the *authority of Christ*, who is the Author of it."

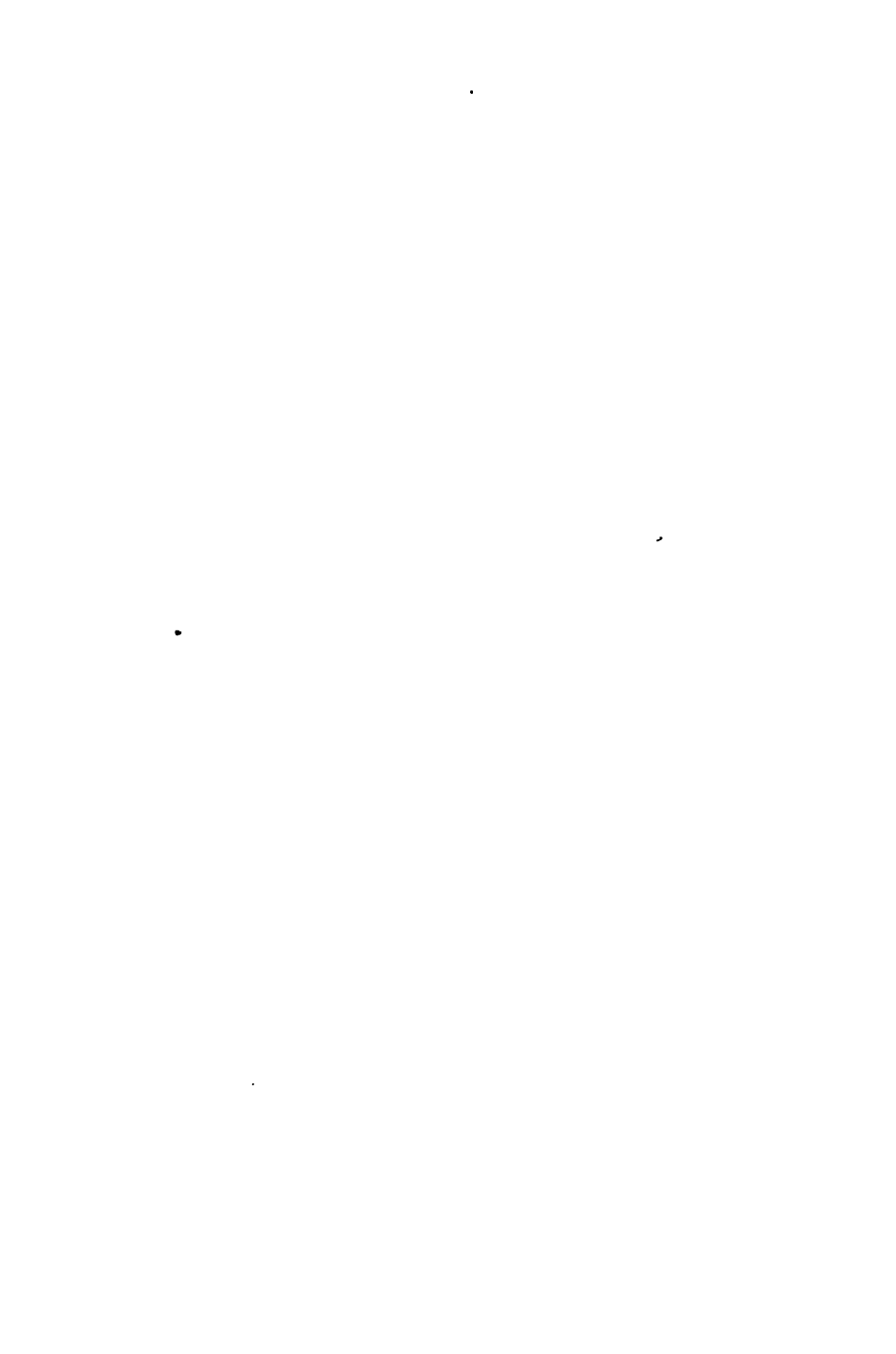
No. 19. "The alone way to be useful in the Church of Christ, is to *abide faithfully under the leadings of his Holy Spirit in all cases*, and being preserved thereby in purity of heart and holiness of conversation, a testimony to the purity of his government may be held forth through us to others."

No. 20. "How necessary is it that we who profess these principles, and are outwardly active in supporting them, *should faithfully abide in Divine strength*, that 'as He who hath called us, is holy, so we may be holy in all manner of conversation.' 1 Peter i. 15."

Epistle to Quarterly and monthly Meetings.









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